

**From:** John Thomas  
**To:** Microsoft ATR  
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**Subject:** Microsoft Settlement

My name is John Thomas, and I am an 18-year-old American citizen residing in North Carolina. Having reached the milestone year, I think I've finally earned the right to voice my opinion and have it matter.

Regarding the antitrust situation with Microsoft corporation, I think that the government is taking the wrong tack. To the average American consumer (a category into which I place myself), it would appear that our government is making him into a helpless victim, one who cannot even choose correctly the software for his computer that would be most beneficial to his work or pleasure. Perhaps I'm completely wrong, but it just seems to me that the government doesn't have the right to decide what can be in my computer or not. After all, I built it. I paid for the components and screwed them together. I paid Microsoft \$99 for the upgrade to Windows 98 and I use it for hours per day. At my job at a therapy clinic, I benefit from Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and Microsoft Word's easy-to-use word processing software.

This case would seem to be a gross miscalculation on the government's part. If I could point your attentions to the fact that the antitrust complaint originated with some of Microsoft's more unsuccessful partners, realize that this wasn't a cry from the people, or from the people Microsoft partners... this was an attempt to lash back at the successful company by its competitors left in the dust. It seems completely illogical and unjust to allow the men whose businesses failed in this particular market to set the regulations for those who have not, like Microsoft corporation.

One question weighing most heavily on my mind is, how can a successful business AND its useful products be a threat to anyone? After all, if one doesn't like Microsoft's products, one doesn't have to use them. I am, after all, also an avid Linux user. If I so chose I could stop using all Microsoft products permanently. However, I choose not to because they are useful, easy to use, and most efficiently get my daily tasks taken care of. I don't see a threat here. I see a businessman, Bill Gates, helping the world to run more smoothly and efficiently, as well as making himself quite a living in the process.

Speaking of Bill Gates, I grew up as a teenager hearing about his rise to one of the richest men in the world. This case would seem to suggest that those who are successful are put on a leash, with a choke chain attached. I've noticed this with the income tax as well. Sitting as I am in the lowest tax bracket and thus paying the least percentage of my income, I still find it unjust that those who are more successful than I, must pay a greater percentage of their income. Correct me if I'm wrong, but growing up I'd always thought that America was supposed to be free. I want that free America--an America where I, with my considerable intelligence and a liberal dose of plain old hard work, could maybe BE the next Bill Gates.

But why would I WANT a successful business? This case seems to demonstrate the truth of the maxim that if my business fails, I can bring down my successful competitors out of spite. How dare they rise above me. How dare they be successful where I was not. How dare they offer a superior product, and charge what it's worth. How dare they take advantage of a free market.

A free market. Isn't that what we're supposed to have here in America? At the very least, that's what they've been teaching me in these public schools from which I so recently graduated. It would seem to me that in a free market such as the one we have in this wonderful country, that Microsoft corporation-- just the same as myself -- has a fundamental right to its property. Correct this high-school graduate if I'm

wrong, but I think the government is supposed to protect the rights of all citizens to their life, liberty, and property. It looks to me like we're robbing Bill Gates of his life, because we're taking his business... and his liberty, because we're shackling him and his freedom to run his business as he sees fit... and his property, in the form of this unjust and illogical antitrust case.

Thank you for your time in listening to my voice. It is, after all, 1/270,000,000th of this country.

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